

## **JJMS CA Distinguished School Model Practices**

*Following the parent-oriented summary, an expanded version is provided for school leaders who need additional details for implementation.*

### **Schoolwide Ability Grouping (Parent-Oriented Summary)**

The practice of ability grouping using standardized test scores was instituted to address the need for differentiation of instruction while increasing the number of effective teachers who remain employed at JJMS and who feel that they are making a difference in the lives of their students. Ability-grouped cohorts mean that the range of skill levels in any one classroom averages about two grade levels instead of seven grade levels. Students are able to move into a higher ability group each quarter of the year to prevent any resemblance to “tracking.”

Our Local Control Accountability Plan includes a goal that our test scores will exceed those of local residential district schools and similar school across our authorizing district. We also have an LCAP goal that specifies that we will reduce the number of students who score at the lowest rank of SBAC performance as the students move from one grade to another at our school. To reach that goal, we make sure that the students with the weakest academic skills have the additional help of a second adult in their classrooms 80% of the time.

The implementation and monitoring of this model is distinguished from the district’s model because over the past three years, our SBAC scores have improved dramatically, especially in comparison to similar schools. By 2017-18, JJMS had 53% of its students meet or exceed ELA standards, which far surpassed the ELA proficiency rate of only 32% at local schools. LAUSD had only 42% of students meet or exceed ELA standards. In math, 52% of JJMS students met or exceeded the standards, which is almost triple the proficiency rate of 18% at local schools. In LAUSD, 31% of students met or exceeded the SBAC math standards. Students are more likely to succeed in high school and therefore in college if they attend JJMS instead of other local schools.

### **Increased Instruction and Intervention (Parent-Oriented Summary)**

Only a few students arrive at JJMS having mastered the grade level standards from elementary school. For example, when the JJMS 8th grade class of 2018 first enrolled in our school as 6th graders, only 28% met or exceeded the standards in ELA, and a paltry 11% met or exceeded the standards in math.

To address the academic shortcomings of our incoming students, our master schedule provides two hours of Math and two hours of ELA instruction each school day. One hour is devoted to grade level curriculum. The second hour is for addressing individual needs for remediation or acceleration in the content area. The second hour of ELA is when we provide targeted support for English Learners.

We provide tutoring at lunchtime, afterschool, Saturday mornings, and a longer period for re-teaching basic concepts during 35 days of Intersession conducted during Winter, Spring and Summer Breaks.

Our remediation has been successful. We met our LCAP goal of phonics mastery for the past three years. We have also moved students out of the lowest rank of performance on the SBAC. When the JJMS 8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2018 first enrolled as 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 43% of the students were at the lowest rank (Rank 1, “Not Met”) in ELA and 52% were at the lowest rank for Math. By the time these students culminated as 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the percentage of students in the lowest rank in ELA dropped from 43% to only 23%. The results were even more dramatic in Math, which saw the percentage of students in the lowest rank drop from 52% to only 18%.

## **Middle School Shouldn't be Awful (Parent-Oriented Summary)**

Middle school is often an emotionally traumatic experience for students. Most people think of middle school as the worst years of schooling. Our practice is distinguished from the district model because we establish very high standards for respectful interaction that includes a ban on unfriendly language like “shut up” or “you’re a loser.” We respond to even small incidents when students don’t meet our high expectations for behavior and mutual respect. Consequences are related to the problem behavior, and in-person counseling meetings with students and parents are all part of our response. We provide a system for students to make written incident reports when they have a conflict with other students. In addition to counseling under the Special Education program, we provide mental health counseling on campus for almost 10% of our students. We frame all of our conversations about unacceptable behavior in the context of wanting students to behave in a way that will make them more likely to get into college and get a good job.

JJMS is not a typical awful middle school experience. On the contrary, our students have a very positive view of the JJMS experience. On the 2017-18 in-house student survey, 95% of our students say that, most of the time, they like being a JJMS student (most of the time). 91% of 360 student responses said that JJMS was safer than other middle schools. 96% of our students reported, “There are a lot of ways to get extra help and tutoring (ex., lunch tutoring, after-school, Saturdays, Intersession, etc.)” In the 2017-18 student survey, 82% of our students said that “If I

have a problem with another student, the adults at JJMS will do something about it.” 96% of our students said that (almost all) of the staff “wants me to succeed in school and in life.”

**SCHOOL LEADER VERSIONS ARE PRESENTED BELOW.**

***FOR SCHOOL LEADERS***

**Schoolwide Ability Grouping**

**Length of Model Program/Practice: 5-7 years**

**Target Area(s):** Parent, Family, and Community Involvement,

**Target Population(s):** Hispanic, Asian, Black or African American, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

**Strategies Used:** School Climate, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

**Description of the Model Practice including why it was established:**

The following model was instituted to address the need for differentiation of instruction while increasing the number of effective teachers who remain employed at JJMS because they feel that they are making a difference in the lives of their students. With heterogenous grouping, the amount of differentiation with a group of students can be staggering when their reading comprehension levels range from second grade to ninth grade. Ability grouped cohorts mean that the spread of skill levels in any one classroom averages about two grade levels instead of 7 grade levels.

In order to facilitate differentiation of instruction by our teachers, students at each grade level are sorted into cohorts based on their academic ability as measured by standardized test scores and course grades. Students are able to move into a higher ability group each quarter of the year to prevent any resemblance to “tracking.” On average, 35 out of 400 students change cohorts each quarter. We have a Special Day Program for students with Individual Education Plans that call for a large amount of service minutes by an Educational Specialist. Our Special Day Program allows these students to be hybrid and mainstream for either ELA or MATH while continuing to have intense services in their weaker academic area. The student staff ratio in our Special Day Program is 11-1.

Resources are expended in correlation to the academic needs of the students in each cohort. Students with the weakest academic skills participate in the SUPPORT cohort and have the smallest class sizes with an additional adult in the classroom to reduce student-staff ratio to 1-14 which allows for more individual attention. For the support cohort, there is a General Education teacher and a second adult for 80% of instructional time. The second adult is either a partner teacher with an Educational Specialist credential or a highly-qualified paraprofessional who has passed the CBEST. The mid-range of ability is divided into GRADE LEVEL- High in Math and GRADE LEVEL- High in ELA. These two cohorts have slightly larger class size and a second adult works with this group for 40% of their instructional time in 6th grade and 25% in 7th and 8th grades. The division of students into two grade level cohorts allows teachers to provide greater depth and coverage of grade level standards in the content area where the students have stronger academic skills. HONORS is the cohort for students with strong academic skills. This group covers curriculum with greater depth and at a faster rate of speed. This group has the largest class size and does not have the support of second adults.

In order to implement this model, a school will need additional funding for second adults including a generous number of Educational Specialists. Assessing students frequently with metrics with high reliability and validity is essential to placing students in the correct ability group and adjusting placements at the end of each quarter. Sufficient staff time must be provided for data analysis of the assessments.

This practice benefits every student enrolled at JJMS, including students with disabilities. It allows students to move forward in their areas of strength and targets additional services for students in their weakest academic areas. The STAR study conducted in Tennessee demonstrated the impact of small class size.

(<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/STARSummer99.pdf>) JJMS cannot afford to maintain separate classes with a size of 15 students, but we try to approximate some of the beneficial conditions by maintaining a staff to student ratio of 1-15 or lower. We also budget for one class of 15 students for a group of incoming 6th grade students with especially weak academic skills. The lower staff to student ratio also supports social and emotional needs of both the students and the teachers. Stronger relationships between teachers and students also increases daily attendance.

We incentivize teachers to make above average efforts to make personal contact with their students and their families to make sure that we communicate interest and individual support for each student. Our teachers can apply for merit pay based on above average engagement practices. Each quarter, certain teacher behaviors are worth stipend points. Some of the actions that earn stipend points are above average contact with parents including making praise calls, or submitting high quality data analysis to the administration

## **Implementation & Monitoring of Model Program/Practice:**

Stakeholders participate in the decision making portion of this practice. Teachers collaborate with administration to create rubrics for placement of students in ability groups. Parents are provided with a worksheet showing the analysis of how their child's placement was calculated and are invited to set an appointment to speak with teachers if they have questions about the placement. The effectiveness of our parent engagement is best represented in the number of applications that we receive for enrollment. Our implementation is distinguished from the district model's declining enrollment because we have grown from 90 students in 2005 to over 400 in 2018. For the past 5 years, applications have exceeded spaces available.

The metric for monitoring and measuring the success of this practice is the Difference from Three score generated by annual Smarter Balanced assessments and the number of students who move into the category of Meet or Exceed state standards. A spreadsheet tracks individual student data across all years of their enrollment at JJMS.

Our LCAP includes a goal that our test scores will exceed those of local residential district schools and similar schools across our authorizing district. We also have an LCAP goal that specifies that we will reduce the number of students who score at the lowest rank of SBAC performance as the students move from one grade to another at our school.

Our budget reflects our focus on effective teaching. To implement merit pay, we have base salaries that are lower than the salaries in surrounding districts. Our budget encumbers \$8,000 per teacher held in reserve to cover merit pay.

## **Results of the Model Program/Practice**

The SBAC data for JJMS students demonstrates the success of this model in preparing students to succeed at a four-year university. College admission is based on completion of A-G classes in high school and a student that meets or exceeds standards on the 8th grade SBAC will not be programmed into remedial classes their freshman year of high school. Over the past three years, our SBAC scores have improved dramatically especially in comparison to similar schools. By 2017-18, JJMS had 53% of students meet or exceed ELA standards while local schools had a median of only 32% with the LAUSD at 42% of students who meet or exceed ELA standards. In math, JJMS had 52% meet or exceed and local schools had 18% and the LAUSD had 31% that could meet or exceed SBAC math standards. Students are more likely to succeed in high school and therefore in college if they attend JJMS instead of other local schools.

Human motivation is centered on a basis of self-efficacy. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23616308>). Therefore teachers who feel that they are making a difference for their students are likely to remain employed at JJMS. Our teachers experience a high level of self-efficacy regarding their ability to improve students' academic skills. Our teachers also receive merit pay for helping students at all levels of skill increase their achievement. 13 out of our 22 teachers are receiving additional merit pay because at least 51% of their students individually made "Significant Improvement" in moving towards grade level standard on the SBAC. The JJMS merit pay metric is based on reviewing the individual performance of each student so that teachers can feel a personal connection to the accomplishment rather than the milder emotional connection generated by a school wide average. 10 out of 21 teachers add more than \$5,000 dollars per year to their base pay with the addition of merit pay.

In the 2018-19 school year, 10 out of our 21 teachers have earned more than \$3000 in merit pay during the first half of the year. At the January 2019 Board Meeting, the Lead Teacher elected by the faculty stated during public comment that the faculty finds the merit pay a great motivation and expressed thanks for the school leadership continuing to budget for this compensation. For our Principal, Assistant Principal, and Director of Special Services JJMS was their first full time teaching job and they have worked their way up into leadership over 7-14 years of service at JJMS.

### ***FOR SCHOOL LEADERS***

## **Increased Instruction and Intervention**

**Length of Model Program/Practice: 10-14 years**

**Target Area(s):** Parent, Family, and Community Involvement,

**Target Population(s):** Hispanic, Asian, Black or African American, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

**Strategies Used:** Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL AND WHY IT WAS INSTITUTED:**

Only a few students arrive at JJMS having mastered the grade level standards from elementary school. The JJMS class of 2018, enrolled in our 6th grade with only 28% meet/exceed in ELA and a paltry 11% meeting or exceeding standards for math. The JJMS class of 2019 also has not mastered elementary content with 35% meet/exceed in ELA and 22% meet/exceed in math upon enrollment in 6th grade at JJMS. Clearly, our students are in dire need of remediation while also continuing to support their access to grade level curriculum.

Our master schedule provides for two hours of Math and two hours of ELA instruction each school day. One hour is devoted to grade level curriculum. The second hour is for addressing individual needs for remediation or acceleration in the content area. The second hour of ELA is when we provided targeted support for English Learners. For 8th graders, ELA instruction is reduced to one hour to allow increased time for Science and History/Social Studies. We mandate faithful implementation of Ironbox Power Over Numbers curriculum for use during our second hour of math instruction.

We establish a high standard for what we consider strong academic performance. At JJMS, students who earn less than 70% in a class do not receive credit for that class and must attend one or more Intersessions (see below) in order to stay on track to qualify for culmination. This choice was made in light of our goal to have every student prepared to succeed at a four-year university where a grade lower than C can prevent a student from completing degree requirements. One of our slogans is “Ds don’t get you degrees.” Additionally, we mandate that more than 70% of the course grade must be from assessments and assignments that represent grade level work that was completed without adult assistance, unless the student has an IEP that mandates otherwise. Administrators work with teachers to help correctly identify student work that meets our standard of Independent Academic Ability. This practice is driven by the need to have parents clearly understand the level of academic ability their child has reached so that the parents can judge how many of our intervention programs to access. We also set standards for remediation of skills that were not mastered in elementary school. For example, one of our One of our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals is that 90% of all students who have been enrolled continuously for one year will pass a phonics inventory. Another LCAP goal measuring remediation is to reduce the number of students who score at the lowest rank of academic performance on the SBAC. We have met this LCAP goals for the past 4 years.

### **Implementation & Monitoring of Model Program/Practice:**

Having established a high standard for academic success, we review student data every quarter to make adjustments in pacing plans and intervention services. Each teacher must submit a data analysis of their own students’ progress using a template created by the administration. The teacher takes note of patterns and highlights students that need additional support. The teacher provides a narrative reflection on how the data patterns will be used to adjust instruction for the coming quarter and what interventions they recommend for struggling students. The teachers are also responsible for making contact with the parent of any student who does not receive credit (NC) for a class by scoring under 70% for the course grade. One of our Local Control Accountability Plan goals is that 100% of parents with students with an NC report card grade have had a teacher conference. We have reached this LCAP goal each of the past 3 years.

We have developed a set of standards for key skills that directly contribute to a student being able to operate and understand the online testing format. One of our LCAP goals is that 75% of our students can touch type at a speed of 25 wpm with 90% accuracy. In every classroom, there is a laptop for every child and JJMS has an LCAP goal that 50% of all classroom observations will show students using their laptops. We also use the full CAASPP system of practice tests, especially the Interim Assessment Blocks (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/sbacinterimassess.asp>). Each content department selects at least one IAB for pre and test post testing during each quarter. The administration reads and scores all of the open-ended responses using the CAASPP hand scoring feature. Our Director of Special Services works with Educational Specialists and General Education teachers to make sure that all testing accommodations contained in an IEP are meticulously implemented, even during practice tests.

Once we have identified a student who needs additional academic support and/or remediation, we are able to provide a wide range of additional instruction and tutoring. Each of our teachers commits to providing lunchtime tutoring for their own students two days per week. Our administration oversees daily mandatory lunchtime tutoring by paraprofessionals for students who have received an NC grade on a progress report or a report card. On most days, this service is provided to 30 students. 50% of our student body participates in our ASES program which includes a minimum of one hour of academic tutoring. Our teachers are required to submit assignments and study guides for each of their NC students which will then be monitored by the after school paraprofessionals. Additionally, 80% of our ASES tutors begin their shift one or two hours before the end of the school so that they can work in classrooms and understand the academic standards of the daytime teachers. We provide a day of additional instruction 37 out of the 40 Saturdays contained in our academic calendar. This program operates from 9am to 12pm each week. Paraprofessionals are on hand to provide assistance with homework, studying for tests and reviewing concepts from any assessment that the student failed. Students who do not have a computer at home can work on our laptops during ASES or Saturday school.

One of our most important interventions is the provision of 35 days of additional instruction for students who have not earned credit for a course. Intersession takes place for one week during Winter Break, two weeks during Spring Break and four weeks during Summer Break. Intersession instruction is provided by credentialed teachers or our most experienced paraprofessionals. A student can earn credit towards culmination and/or improve an NC grade to passing grade of C by successfully passing a week of intersession. Parents are informed that attendance for intersession is required, and while we do not have a legal mechanism for enforcing this mandate, we do provide written documentation of how failure to attend will prevent their child from being promoted to the next grade level.



Our school practices retention of 6th and 7th grade students who do not have the academic skills to succeed in the next grade level.

It isn't enough to have intervention programs available, intense parent outreach must take place throughout the year to make sure that students are participating in all of our intervention programs. During the Welcome Breakfast that takes place before the first day of school, teachers provide descriptions of all the various times when tutoring is available. At the Breakfast, parents can sign up for our free after-school program so that their child can participate on the very first day of school. Because every teacher is required to contact parents when their child receives No Credit (NC) in a class, this provides an ideal time for the teacher to strongly encourage parents to take advantage of our various intervention programs. Parents are constantly informed in writing of the intervention programs which can be used to provide additional instruction to prevent retention as a reminder is included in every progress report and report card. We hold workshops every quarter to meet individually with parents of children with NC on a report card and in those meetings, we advocate intensely for participation in our intervention programs. 8th grade parents receive a monthly report on their child's progress towards culmination. Students who are not likely to earn enough credits to move into the next grade receive both letters and phone calls from the Principal to remind them of the critical importance of attending Intersession.

Finally, we hold students accountable for mastering the content and earning passing grades. In the past three years, we have retained few students but we feel that sending a child ahead to the next grade when they have no reasonable chance of success is likely to increase their disengagement with education.

### **Results of the Model Program/Practice**

We are achieving our goal of having the majority of our students participate in more than one intervention or academic support program. During the 2018-19 school year, 103 students participated in Winter intersession with 81 students earning back credits for failed courses. This means that 20% of our total school enrollment.

Our remediation has been successful. We met our LCAP goal of phonics mastery for the past 3 years. We have also moved students out of the lowest rank of performance on the SBAC. When the JJMS class of 2018 enrolled, 43% of the students were at the lowest rank in ELA and 52% were at "Not Met" for Math. By culmination, Class of 2018 had reduced the number of students with the lowest academic rank from an enrollment high of 43% in ELA rank 1 to a culmination with only 23% of the students scoring at the lowest SBAC rank. In Math, 52% of Class of 2018 were at the lowest rank when they enrolled and by culmination only 18% remained in the lowest rank. This demonstrates the impact of our increased instructional time and all of our intervention programs. The California Department of Education says that an average improvement on SBAC

scores of 15 points represents “Significant Improvement”. At JJMS in Spring of 2018, the average improvement towards meeting SBAC grade level standards at JJMS was 18 points for ELA and an improvement of 33 points in Math.

### ***FOR SCHOOL LEADERS***

## **Middle School Shouldn't Be Awful**

**Length of Model Program/Practice: 5-7 years**

**Target Area(s):** Parent, Family, and Community Involvement,

**Target Population(s):** Hispanic, Asian, Black or African American, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

**Strategies Used:** Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, School Climate, Parent Engagement, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, external mental health resources brought on campus

### **Description of the Model Practice including why it was established:**

Middle School is often an emotionally traumatic experience for students. An Op-Ed piece in the New York Times begins by saying “ The sheer unpleasantness of middle school has become something of a cliché”

<https://op-talk.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/10/time-to-ban-middle-school/>. JJMS has created multiple structures to make sure that students will describe their experience in positive terms. Reducing the amount of bullying is essential to avoiding long term negative impact on physiological and psychological health for middle school students.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4552909/>

Academic success is only possible with a positive and supportive school climate. Students must believe that the school staff care about them and are acting in their best interest. Students must feel that they can have peer conflicts resolved appropriately. Students should feel that an abundance of help and support is available to help them meet academic standards. When you apply Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs to schools, it is clear that academic endeavors cannot progress when basic social and emotional needs are not met.

[http://blogs.butler.edu/integratedcore2block/files/2012/12/Sharp-Scanning\\_20130219\\_112726.pdf](http://blogs.butler.edu/integratedcore2block/files/2012/12/Sharp-Scanning_20130219_112726.pdf)

JJMS requires a very high standard of ethical behavior from staff and students. We have two full time Behavior Support Coordinators who work under the supervision of the Principal to carefully de-escalate negative peer interactions and to provide logical consequences when students do not meet behavioral expectations. Students who want to report a negative interaction with peers fill out an Incident Report and an investigation will begin within 24 hours This practice discourages

students from trying to solve interpersonal conflicts on their own and allows counseling and guidance to help students work together effectively. We have schoolwide standards for what behavior is considered a minor problem and what behavior constitute a major breach of expectations. The designation of minor or major is reviewed annually in collaboration with teachers and staff. This prevents the confusion that occurs when one teacher feels that getting out of your seat without permission is a problem while another teacher allows that behavior. All major problems trigger an immediate referral to a Behavior Support Coordinator who will investigate the incident and work with the principal to determine appropriate consequences. The success of these practices is reflected in quantifiable data from district and in-house surveys. We also believe that our 98% attendance rate is proof that students are comfortable being at school and do not try to avoid attending class. Our chronic absenteeism rate is less than 1% which is distinguished from the district model with

We provide students with the ability to self-regulate their behavior. Students can inform adults that they are not able to work effectively in a regular classroom and they can spend the day working on their academic assignments in a small group environment that is closely monitored by a credentialed teacher. On an average day, we have 10-12 students in this Supervised Solo Instruction setting.

JJMS uses a program called Deans List to track when students exceed our expectations and when they do not meet our expectations. A school wide system of rewards is available and students can purchase rewards using the number of merits that they have recorded on DeansList. One of our LCAP goals is that 60% of all of our students will receive public recognition for above average performance on academic or behavioral goals each school year. We also have an LCAP goal that 100% of our students will receive written praise from an adult every year. We have met these LCAP goals each of the last 4 years.

At JJMS, we promote parent engagement and track our success with several quantifiable LCAP goals, such as achieving quorum at four English Learner Advisory Committee meetings every year. We also mandate teacher contact for any student who receives an NC grade on a report card. We track this contact for our LCAP goal of 100% of parents having a conference if their child earns an NC grade or if they have hit the year-to-date criteria for chronic absenteeism. In the Fall 2018 Dashboard, we earned a rating of green for controlling Chronic Absenteeism.

### **Results of the Model Program/Practice**

JJMS is not a typical awful middle school experience. Actually, our students have a very positive view of the JJMS experience. On the 2017-18 in-house student survey, 95% of our students say that, most of the time, they like being a JJMS student . 91% of 360 student responses said that JJMS was safer than other middle schools. 96% of our students report “There are a lot of ways to

get extra help and tutoring (ex. lunch tutoring, after-school, Saturdays, Intersession, etc.)” In the 2017-18 student survey, 82% of our students said that “If I have a problem with another student, the adults at JJMS will do something about it.” 96% of our students said that (almost all) of the staff “wants me to succeed in school and in life.”